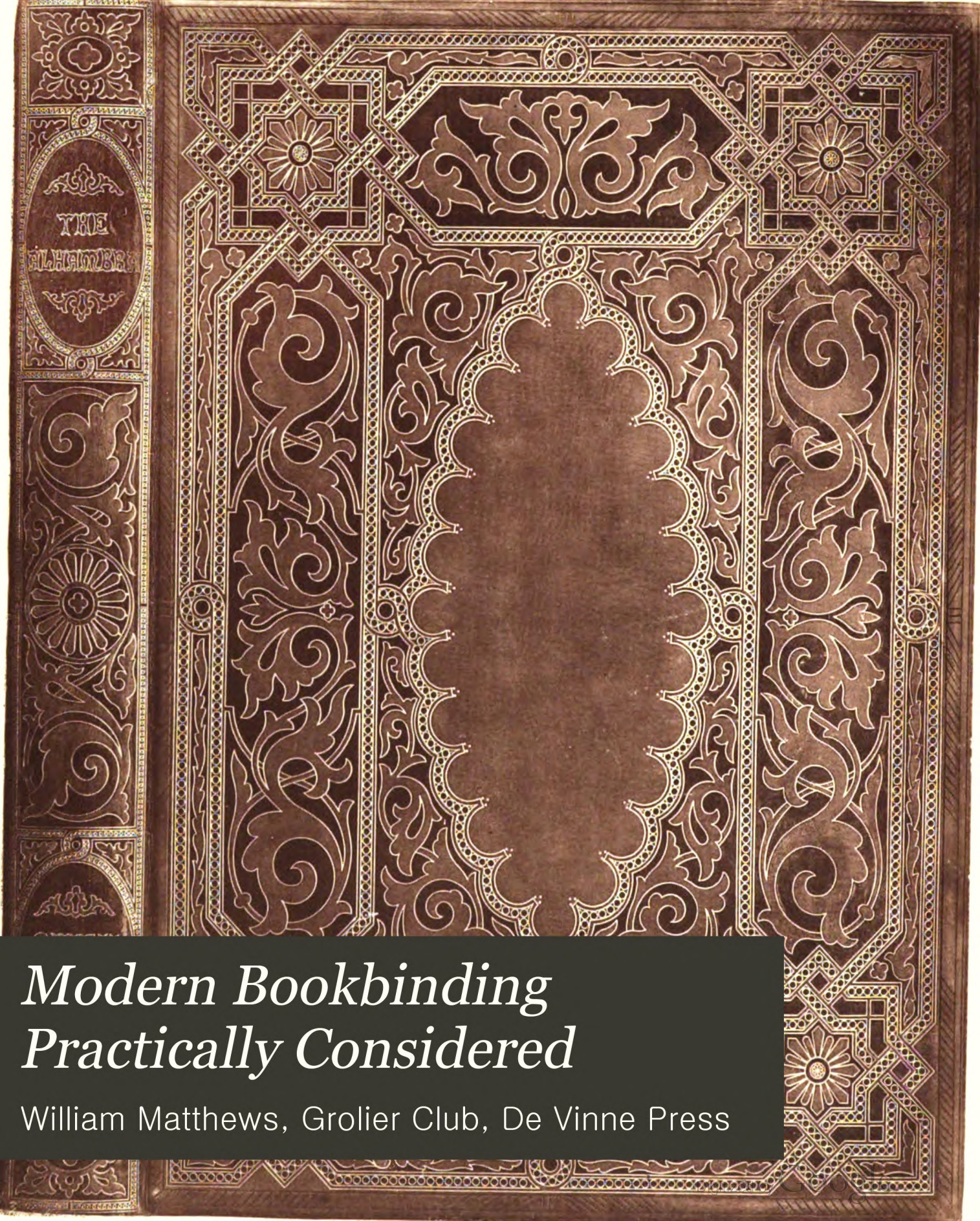

Modern Bookbinding Practically Considered

William Matthews, Grolier Club, De Vinne Press

The Publication Committee of the Grolier Club certify that this is one of three hundred copies of a special edition of Modern Bookbinding Practically Considered, on Holland paper, and of three copies on vellum, all of demy quarto size, which were printed in the month of November, 1889.

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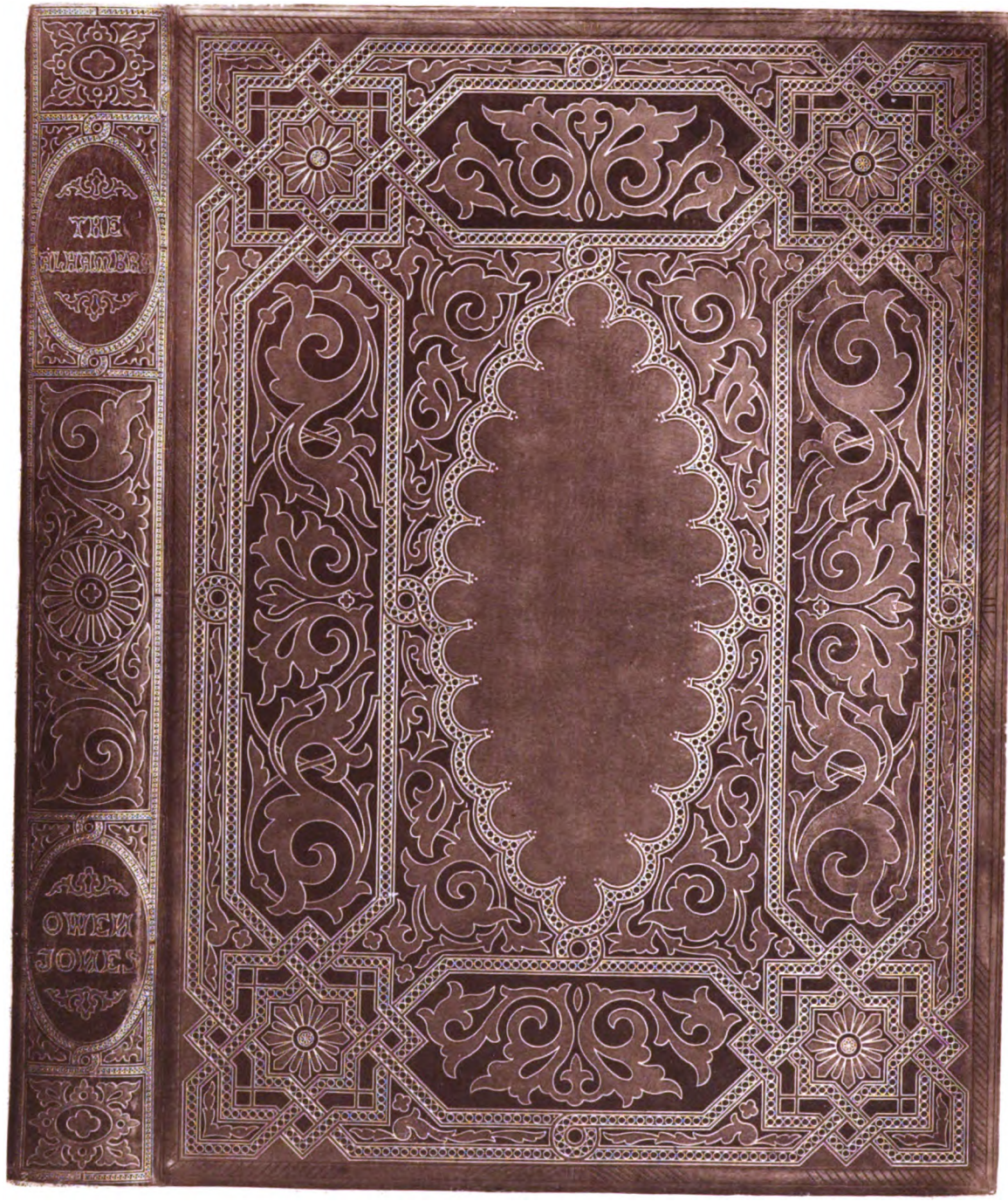

THE ALHAMBRA.

OUTSIDE DESIGN.

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MODERN BOOKBINDING PRACTICALLY CONSIDERED

A LECTURE

READ BEFORE THE GROLIER CLUB OF NEW-YORK, MARCH 25, 1885
WITH ADDITIONS AND NEW ILLUSTRATIONS

BY

WILLIAM MATTHEWS

NEW-YORK
THE GROLIER CLUB
MDCCCLXXXIX

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A DESCRIPTION OF THE ILLUSTRATIONS.

PAGE.

1. THE ALDINE STYLE. *(Italian.)* 68

A contemporary design. The ornaments are of solid face and not formed into scrolls. The frame is formed of simple geometrical figures.

2. THE MAIOLI STYLE. *(Italian.)* 70

A contemporary design. The ornaments are chiefly azured, which the reproduction but faintly illustrates. The two shields are inlaid with color, and the inner field is studded with gold dots enriching the center in contrast to the outer field of the design. The scroll-work is graceful and masterly.

3. THE GROLIER STYLE. *(French.)* 72

A contemporary design. The ornaments are all azured. The frame is elaborately designed and intersected, forming the chief feature of the design. The scroll-work is meager and stiff.

4. THE ÈVE STYLE. *(French.)* 74

A contemporary design. The ornaments are circular scrolls, flowers and branches. The frame is composed of many variously shaped compartments skillfully connected by intersected circles, the centers of which are filled with flowers and circular scrolls. The branches of laurel and other foliage surrounding these compartments form the chief feature of an Ève design.

5. THE GASCON STYLE. *(French.)* 76

A contemporary design. The frame is similar in its compartments and connections to an Ève design. The ornaments are dotted on the face instead of solid line. This dotted ornament is the distinguishing feature of a Gascon design.

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PAGE.

6. THE ROGER PAYNE STYLE. *(English.)* 80

A contemporary design for a copy of "La Pucelle." Though small this is a good example of the style. The ornaments are characteristically floral and graceful in the stalk. They are arranged in individual and not in connected form. There is an entire absence of scroll-work and fillets. Roger Payne seldom failed to decorate appropriately, so the wreath border and the *fleur-de-lis* are thus used in this instance. The gold-dot studding *à la Maioli*, another feature of this style, is shown in the four center corners, and it is evident the four corners of the border were intended to be studded in like manner.

7. A MODERN DESIGN (1853). *(American.)* . . *Frontispiece*

For a copy of the "Alhambra" by Owen Jones. The cover is of light brown or yellow russia. The frame of the *outside* design is inlaid with red and the panels with blue morocco, leaving the scroll-work yellow. The frame of the border of the *inside* design is inlaid with blue with the intersected and quartered circles and diamonds in red. The panel is of white vellum, the fillet and half-diamond figures of which are inlaid with blue and the full-diamond figures with yellow morocco. A special feature of this design is its complete decorative treatment in outline, without the aid of engraved ornaments.

8. A MODERN DESIGN (1865). *(American.)* 94

For a copy of Longmans' edition of the "New Testament," bound by William Matthews of New-York. The cover is of light brown morocco. The frame is inlaid with light blue and the centers of the four symbolic figures with red. The scroll-work interlacing the frame fills every compartment without crowding and is graceful and masterly. This design exemplifies perfectly a complete decorative treatment without the aid of engraved tools, and the illustration affords proof of the exactness of its execution.

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THE ALHAMBRA.

INSIDE DESIGN.

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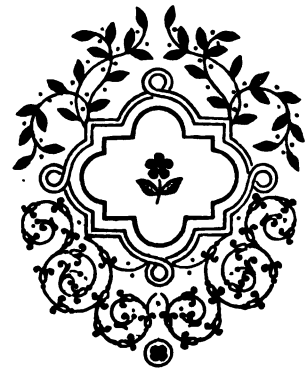

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AN ADDRESS ON MODERN BOOKBINDING PRACTICALLY CONSIDERED.

I HAVE been requested by the Council of the Grolier Club to address you on the subject of Modern Bookbinding Practically Considered. I take it for granted that this means Extra Binding. By Extra Binding I mean that which the binder is called upon to do for private libraries, in distinction from publishers' work, the former being chiefly done by hand, the latter by machinery. It may be well to observe that these two branches are distinct in character, and the processes

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employed in each are so different that they demand separate description.

Had I chosen the title of my address I would have omitted the term "Modern," because I think the Commercial binding of the day deserves that term, in distinction from the Library style which we designate as "Extra Binding," the general character of which has many features and processes resembling those of centuries ago. The mechanical processes by which we bind the enormous issues of the modern printing press are the results—largely American, I am pleased to say—of modern invention. When I was born, the present cloth fabric that is now used so extensively for commercial binding was then unknown. Publishers' work was then bound in paper-covered boards, with a paper label—a style attractive to the eye of the modern collector, as it insures him uncut edges, unwrinkled and lightly sawed back, and the absence of faults which machinery has introduced. This machine binding, in spite of its faults, deserves in a sense to be commended, for by the result of much ingenuity it meets the demands of speed and cheap-

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ness and affords a style of ornamentation suitable to the requirements of the masses. A history of the growth of this branch of bookbinding would not only be interesting in setting forth the development of the various machines and the struggles of their inventors, but I am sure the statistics of its growth and capabilities would appear marvelous to us.

I assume, however, that "Extra," or fine handwork, binding is my subject, and that as it is principally practiced in our time. Mine is not the pleasure to narrate the historic past, with all its chivalry and romance—when kings and queens, nobles and men of letters, all aspired to have their favorite authors bound in tapestry and velvet, bedecked with rare and costly jewels; when ivory and gold were none too rich for their missals; and when, at a later period, artists of high repute invented designs for the decoration of the covers, of such excellence that they have served as patterns for all time since. No, that has already been well done by our president; but mine is the more prosaic duty to describe as practically as possible the principles of the art. To impart all

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important information regarding the manufacture of books, to give every facility to its members to acquire a knowledge of the art of book-making, and to encourage the various branches connected therewith is, as I understand it, the aim and purpose of the Grolier Club. I believe it is not by what we individually accomplish, but by what we severally impart to others, that Art is advanced; and therefore I cheerfully undertake to do my part, trusting in your kind indulgence. My effort will be to specify the *principles* that I consider constitute good binding: not to describe all the minute processes necessary to make you amateur binders, as most of the treatises on the art attempt; but to impart that information which will qualify you to know the characteristics of a well-bound book, to enable you to order your binding in a clear and technical manner, and to qualify you with the ability of an expert to judge of the excellences and defects of a binding, for in every specimen both will be found. For, believe me, I have never in my long experience seen a binding perfect in all its parts.

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It is a very important art: it has been patronized and encouraged by the learned and the wealthy in all ages of its existence. Its purpose is to permanently preserve the best and noblest thoughts of mankind. It has made possible the founding of libraries, thus preserving the literature of ages and affording the student a facility of reference. Joined with printing, of which it is a necessary part, it has afforded more pleasure and happiness to people of culture than any other art. And it is eminently deserving the study and effort of patrons and artisans to raise it to a higher perfection than it has ever reached.

It is also a difficult art. I think its difficulties should be considered and borne in mind by every patron and criticizing connoisseur. I may be very ignorant of the difficulties of other arts that have been mastered more successfully, but from the fact that my own has for ages received such great patronage and encouragement, and that the productions of the most eminent and successful of my craft are at the best very imperfect, I am convinced that there are difficulties peculiar to bookbinding. Every single

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book that the binder receives requires a somewhat different treatment—that is, the processes must be modified according to the material that constitutes the book, or to the style that the caprice of his customer demands. The publisher and the printer too often ignore the possibilities of the binder's art—supplying him with paper as rigid as iron or as spongy as tissue, and then looking for flexibility in the one and solidity in the other. Connected as binding is with printing, and dependent as the printer is upon the binder to set forth his art to good advantage, it is wonderful how little the latter is consulted either in the paper or form of imposition of any publication. Another difficulty is the sensitiveness, as it were, of the material he has to work with and its unavoidable imperfections. Leather cannot be procured without some flaws—the rugged and hardy goat must get many a scratch and scar on his valuable hide, and his skin should not be expected without blemish. Leather also contracts with heat and expands with cold. Take any of your well-seasoned bindings from a cool library into an overheated parlor and you will soon observe

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the curling of the upper cover. The millboard also that he uses, however well seasoned, is subject to damp and dryness, and the gold-leaf to the influence of climate and impure gas. But the difficulty more annoying than all is the demand which the arbitrary fancies of ignorant customers often make, breaking through all rules and established principles. Some of these demands are so ridiculous that they are only equaled by the request of the pious old lady who desired a Bible made for her of large *pica* print of *pocket* size. In your criticisms, therefore, on book-binding weigh well these difficulties: Is the paper of the book substantial enough to be made solid, or pliable enough to be made flexible? Is the morocco of good quality though it has a flaw on its surface? Does the board warp and the gold tarnish because of influences over which the binder has no control, and, above all, is the taste displayed the binder's own or that of his patron? In addition to these difficulties with the material part, it must also be borne in mind that the mechanical parts of the binding are so numerous and so dependent on each other that I

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avow it would be almost a miracle if the binding in all its parts was perfect.

Let me briefly mention these: Folding, Beating and Pressing, Collating, Sewing, Papering, Rounding, Backing, Cutting, Squaring of Boards, Gilding or Coloring of Edges, Headbanding, Lining of Back, Covering and Finishing not only with appropriate design but in the perfect working of every separate tool, besides many less important points, *upon the perfection of each of which the excellence of all the other parts more or less depends.*

The modern extra binder is a lineal descendant of the ancient binder; his principles are the same, his methods and tools are almost identical with those used by the craft four hundred years ago—the beating hammer, the sewing frame, the forwarder's hammer, laying press, and cutting plow; and the finisher's tools, fillets, and rolls are all similar to his.

Modern workmanship chiefly differs from the old in its greater exactness and neatness; its mechanism is identical, but it is often lacking in the solidity and strength of the old. The sewing of many old volumes

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is as good to-day as when it was done centuries ago. The old binder's aim was undoubtedly strength; his crudity of workmanship was largely owing to the means he adopted to obtain this strength, and to his application in all the branches of his art. By the division of labor we are in general the gainers of an exactness and neatness unknown to the ancient binder.

The principal branches or departments of Extra Binding are:

First, The Preparing, or getting ready.

Second, The Forwarding.

Third, The Covering.

Fourth, The Finishing, or decoration of the cover.

The preparing, or getting ready, involves the folding, or the pulling to pieces (if the volume has been previously bound), the beating and pressing, the plating, or insertion of illustrations, the collating, and the sewing.

In getting ready the volume for binding, three of the most important principles of a well-bound book

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are involved. These are Solidity, Strength, and Flexibility. So important are these, I care not how handsomely the cover is finished, whether by a Trautz, a Capé, or a Lortic, the binding will be lamentably deficient if these principles are not observed. A careful master binder gives this department his chief care, directing the initiatory parts of the work with an intelligent foresight of the ultimate requirements of the binding. The success of his workmanship very largely depends on the volume being properly prepared.

We all know that the printed sheet is so imposed by the printer that it cannot be read until it is folded, and that the several sheets do not become a book until they are arranged consecutively. On true folding depends equal margins and squareness of page.

The rules to observe in this department, though simple, are important. The first is careful collating. The late Mr. James Lenox, whose equal among collectors in this respect I never knew, collated every volume before he sent it to, and after he received it from, the binder. The bill was paid as soon as he

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found every leaf perfect, both blank and printed; never before. I shall never forget my first visit to his house, where he summoned me on business. The maid who admitted me locked the front door, taking the key with her, and then closed the inner one, leaving me standing in the vestibule a prisoner. I recollect my sensation at the peculiarity of my situation. Mr. Lenox, however, soon came, transacted his business with me in the vestibule, and when through unlocked the outer door and let me go, I none the wiser as to the beautiful house and its contents. At my next visit I was admitted to the inner hall, and ultimately, after many visits, to his splendid library. From him I first learned how to split paper, and some of his De Bry I perfected with illustrations split off from duplicate copies. He was one of the few collectors who knew the inside as well as the outside of his collection.

From his careful collating I made the rule that every book of value, on its receipt, should be collated page by page; its title, preface, and list of contents examined; if an illustrated book, every plate checked

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by its list; then, if found imperfect, I would have the satisfaction of returning it to my customer in a condition returnable by him to the person from whom he had purchased it. If the volume is perfect it is then divested of its old cover, and section by section pulled apart or separated, and every thread and particle of old glue removed. For the better beating and pressing of the volume the illustrations or maps, if any, are removed, then the texture of the paper and date of publication are examined, and the volume subjected to beating and pressing accordingly.

If, as in many old volumes, the impressions of the type are heavy, the leaves should be damped and pressed in smooth boards, for no book can be made solid with these impressions in. For the permanent solidity of the volume beating is the best process to obtain it. A spongy book is very unsatisfactory. No process of pressing or rolling is equal to the old-fashioned beating hammer. The impression of the types having stretched the center of the page somewhat, while the margins have received no impression, confines the stretch to the center, causing the cock-

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ling that is always observed in old books. This renders it necessary that the margins be equally stretched by the hammer to give freedom to the swell. Beating as it used to be practiced is now almost a lost art. The workman takes eight or ten sheets in his left hand, and with a hammer of twelve or fourteen pounds weight in his right hand brings successive blows on the sheets on a solid block of stone or iron, shifting the sheets at every blow.

From the fear of set-off, books newly printed can be beat only on the margins; but old printed volumes should be beat all over the page. After this the sheets in thin sections must be pressed for twenty-four hours in smooth boards in a screw or hydraulic press. Sometimes with very old books it is necessary to repeat the operation; and here I would remark that if the patron knew how often, to produce first-class work, the binder has to repeat his processes, he would be less strict in confining him to a price. Good, conscientious binding cannot be obtained without a frequent outlay of extra labor, and therefore no comparison should be used by a

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patron of the dishonest work of one binder to reduce the honest price of another. When the volume is taken out of press every leaf should lie flat and the volume should be as solid as a brick, provided the paper is of proper quality. Many volumes bound in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries have large notches cut in the back for the twine bands; these notches should be repaired if the volume is required in best binding. The result will well repay the tedious operation.

All plates and maps that have been removed can now be replaced. If the illustrations are on thick paper, they should be guarded with jaconet on both sides; if on moderately thin paper, one side will suffice. The jaconet should then, to insure the free opening up of the illustration to the back of the book, be brought round the sheet, or section of the sheet, to avoid the pasting of the illustration to the leaf it backs or faces. This will insure flexibility and free opening. The book, having been handled since first collated, should now, immediately before sewing, be re-collated. First, see that the half title,

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the full title, the dedication, the preface, the list of contents, the list of illustrations, all precede the text in the order named; then the text, and lastly the index, if any. Second, check the illustrations by the list and see that they face the required pages. When the illustrations are printed lengthways of the book always place them with the title running from bottom to top of the page. Placing this class of illustrations both ways, as practiced by some pictorial paper and magazine printers, is an error which should be immediately corrected. When so placed the reader, to view them, has to turn the volume from left to right and from right to left, and if the volume is large this is an annoying labor. Some few argue the opposite of this rule by asserting that the title or reading on the plate should always go to the foredge; but which is more important, a convenient view of the illustration or its title? Lastly, collate the sheets by signature marks from beginning to end.

And now the all-important branch of sewing must engage our attention. Strength and Flexibility are the principles involved. Strength is the first princi-

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ple in binding—we all acknowledge its importance; it is, in fact, the economy of the whole art. Flexibility, however, is necessary to the convenient and comfortable use of every book; it is a luxurious quality. In the perfect binding of any book both these principles must exist—the sheets must be firmly and permanently secured, and yet the volume when bound must open flexibly and freely. To insure both these principles in the sewing is a difficult problem for the binder to solve, considering the variety of material that comes to his hand. If the volume has been previously bound—as the majority of the publications are at the present day—by machine methods, with deep saw-cuts in the back, then it is useless to sew the book so flexibly that the free opening of the sheets exposes these defects; it becomes rather a necessity to hide them by making the back rigid and difficult to open; but we all know what a dreadful sacrifice of comfort this is to the reader. Again, if the volume is composed of single leaves, perhaps of thin text and heavy illustrations, or if the age of the volume has rotted or weakened

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the back of the sections, the style of sewing best adapted to insure flexibility and strength cannot be adopted. And not only has the binder to take into consideration the material to be sewed, but also the leather with which the volume is to be covered; for all leathers are not equally suitable for a flexible back. Calf, whether dull or polished in the finish, is not suitable for a flexible back, nor is crushed levant, owing to its polished surface; because the free opening of a flexible back will wrinkle and destroy the finish of these leathers. For these leathers a partially flexible style may be aimed at. This is undoubtedly the reason why all books bound in Paris in crushed levant are so rigid and difficult to open. The French binders prefer to preserve the beauty of the finished back of their bindings rather than to give their customers the luxury of a flexible binding. With these and some other exceptions considered, the style best adapted to insure strength and flexibility is that technically styled *Raised bands*, or *Flexible* sewing. Whenever it is practicable it is the very best for durability and convenience. It is

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the method adopted by the old binders, not so much on their part for flexibility, however, as for strength; they used double bands generally—thongs of raw-hide suitable for lacing into their wooden boards. Strength was their main object, and thankful ought we to be to them that not only was it aimed at but secured.

The aim in our day is cheapness; hence strength in sewing is avoided. The sewing is so effectually covered up in the binding that the public cannot examine its quality, and are therefore easily hoodwinked. Efforts to depart long ago from the system of the old binders caused a law to be enacted in England fining any binder who sewed his books on false bands. Raised-band sewing requires no saw marks; the needle's point is all that can be seen. There are no gashes or furrows for the glue to fill and rigidly bind the back; the back is perfectly flexible. There are five bands of hard twisted cord which act as so many springs at the back, throwing the sheets up to open freely without danger of strain. The thread takes its course through the center of

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the sheet, making in succession an entire circle of each band, hugging them close to the sections, thus:

This style of sewing is specially suited for Bibles, Cyclopædias, Dictionaries, and books of reference; in fact, it should be employed in every case of fine binding where the material and the style of cover renders it practicable. Morocco of an unpolished finish is the best leather to use where this style of sewing is adopted. It is three or four times the cost of the ordinary, or sunk-band, sewing, and must not be expected in cheap work. It must also be understood that the bands upon which the sheets are sewed in this style are the veritable bands on the back of the book when finished, whereas in the ordinary style of sewing false bands are used. *Sunk-band* is the ordinary style of the book sewing of our time. Here the sheets are sawed with three or five furrows to admit the bands of twine and give the needle greater freedom. The band, and the glue that sinks into these saw-cuts, together with the back lining necessary to cover them, render the back very stiff and rigid, giving a

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resistance to the free opening of the book, and when force is used the result is often a broken back. The sewing is also much weaker than in the raised-band style, the thread only making a half instead of a full circle of the band. This style of sewing is customary on much of our best library work, because American publishers have a greater regard for cheapness than the fitness of their publications for rebinding. The publishers of France and Germany favor the better style by issuing most of their publications either in paper or cloth sewed cheaply with a sharp pointed needle, not needing saw marks. Every one who compares an English and an American cloth-bound book will observe how much more freely the English book opens. True, it may be said the binding is too free and the back not strong enough; but the English consider cloth as a temporary binding, whereas we try to make it a permanent one by sawing it and glueing it, and lining it with muslin and paper, as though flexibility was entirely abandoned as a principle of bookbinding. Were our publishers of standard literature willing to pay two or three cents extra

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per volume to have their publications sewed on tape without saw-marks, they would effect a great improvement in binding and confer a benefit on the book-loving community. A demand of this kind would help to bring about what I have for some time been promoting, the invention of a sewing machine that did not require saw-cuts.

There is another style of sewing, called overcasting, for single leaves, as in volumes of steel illustrations, music, and the like. Four or six of these leaves are overcast neatly together and then sewed through like folded sheets, but better still if the illustrations are guarded with jaconet. The first and last sheet of every well-bound book should be overcast, as this enables these sheets the better to hold the end-paper and withstand the working of the boards. The sewing of the volume finishes the work in the preparatory department, and the collector will bear in mind the important principles here involved—*solidity* in the thorough beating and pressing of the sheets, and the style of sewing that will insure both *strength* and *flexibility*. If the book

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is to be bound in morocco, and the sheets have not been deeply sawed in, order the raised band sewing; the difference of cost will be small on a binding costing dollars.

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I

THE volume now goes to the forwarding department. The term forwarding is somewhat technical, and implies that the volume in this department is forwarded from the preparing to the finishing. The processes here are largely mechanical in distinction from the finishing; they are more dependent on the skill of the hand than the head. The chief principle involved is *trueness*. Forwarding is literally the forming or shaping of the book. The operations are the attaching of the end-papers, the glueing, rounding, and backing of the volume, the squaring and lacing in of the boards, and the cutting of the edges.

The selection of suitable inside linings or ends has always been a difficult question of taste and judgment. That which is alike suitable, appropriate, and beautiful cannot easily be obtained. In determining the question it must be remembered the lining is the

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inside finish to the cover, the first attraction on opening it. The eye therefore seems to look for something in consonance with the cover—not necessarily similar in tint or richness, but either in harmony or agreeable contrast. If the cover is plain the linings may also be simple, though we often see exceptions to this in richly decorated insides to Janseniste binding; if the cover is handsomely tooled the linings are more appropriate if rich. To establish their suitableness the quality of the linings should be permanent in character, especially in tint, resisting the grease of the leather, the stain of paste, and the fading of color by time. Their appropriateness and beauty depend on the color and richness of the cover. Therefore these points must be borne in mind in the selection.

The French, whom we are apt to acknowledge as our best guides in taste, often select for the insides of their handsome bindings moire silk; but this does not work well with leather, and is more pleasing to the feminine eye than to the taste of either the binder or collector. In their more costly bindings they adopt the *double* style, which is leather inside the board

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similar in quality though different in color to the outside. This leads to expensive ornamentation and only half solves the question, leaving the selection of the fly-leaf a matter still to be determined. In their ordinary library bindings they use marbled paper. Crimson, lavender, and violet tinted papers were very much used by Mackenzie, Lewis, and other English binders during the time of Dibdin, who approved their use; but time has condemned them: they show the stain of grease from the turning in leather and by the fading of the colors. Marbled paper does not show the stains of grease and paste, and is more durable in color than the tinted paper. Unfortunately, the bad taste of marblers and the careless judgment of binders in selection have justly created a distaste for marbled paper; but its suitableness is established by the use of centuries. Its permanent character has been proved by time: it resists the stains of grease and paste, and its colors are unfading. It is true it lacks the richness necessary for a very richly decorated binding. In such case there is nothing left but to adopt the *double* style. In

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general bindings I favor, from the lack of anything better, marbled paper; it should, however, be paper of the very best quality, the marbling in good taste, and the prevailing color either in harmony or agreeable contrast with the color of the cover. If marblers would produce patterns with the principal color favoring or agreeable in contrast to the prevailing shades of leather, instead of intermingling in a hodge-podge manner every color they possess, they would help to correct the distaste for marbled paper that now prevails. I have lately had a paper marbled with one color only—it is a deep crimson; I have used it in a volume covered in dark olive morocco, and the effect is agreeable. Vellum fly-leaves are very subject to the stain of the turning in leather and are likely to warp and curl; they should only be used for books printed on vellum, or for purposes of inside decorative illumination. The richly decorated papers introduced by De la Rue from designs by Owen Jones, though extensively used many years ago, did not become popular. In richness I have never seen them surpassed.

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The fly-leaves, whatever they may be, having been securely attached, the volume is forwarded. Strength and flexibility, the principles named as all important in preparing the volume, are dependent in a measure on the forwarding and covering processes: for instance, strength in the thorough rubbing of good and hot glue between the sections, and flexibility in the careful lining of the back preparatory to covering. But, as I have said, the important principle to be observed in forwarding is *trueness*. The form and shape of the book depends on the forwarder, and the test of the quality of his work is its trueness. The back of the volume must be rounded true, otherwise when the foredge is cut the concave of that edge will be untrue; the millboards must be squared truly, or the volume will stand unevenly and the finisher's design be untrue; the squares—by these are meant the projections of the boards that extend beyond the book when it is cut—must be equal and regulated in size according to the size of the volume; and, more important than all, on trueness of cutting depends trueness of margins.

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The backing of the volume, which is the spreading of the back with a hammer to form grooves for the boards and joints for the book, must be exactly true, or the boards will open askew like a door crookedly hinged. Thus the processes of the forwarder are important in the production of a well-bound book.

After the processes of glueing, rounding, and backing, the boards are laced to the book with the bands the volume was sewed on; then the volume is placed in the standing press for at least twenty-four hours to set solidly the new form it has assumed. While in the press the back is soaked with paste and all the refuse or outside glue cleaned from it, rendering it more flexible. When the back is dry the volume is taken from the press, cut on the edges and then sent to the gilder or marbler as the order may require.

A gilt edge is the only proper edge for a handsomely bound volume; the metal leaf preserves the edge of the paper, dust is easily removed from it, and it is elegant in appearance. Gilding over carmine or marble adds richness and beauty to the edges. The gilding of the foredge in the round is very superior

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to gilding flat, as in ordinary binding it is usually done. As a collector, I should preserve uncut all books that came into my hands in that state, gilding the tops only; but if the edges have once been cut and I desired a handsome and permanent binding, I should full gild.

It is often a doubtful point with the collector what leather is best for the cover of his volumes. This is best determined by a knowledge of the qualities of the various skins.

Sheepskin is the commonest leather used for binding. When unsplit it is called a *roan;* when split in two the upper half is called a *skiver*, the under or fleshy half a *flesher*. The surface of sheep, whether as a roan or skiver, is very tender, easily rubs, and soon looks shabby. In the substance of a roan the skin is fairly strong, but slightly weaker as a skiver.

I was called lately to see a law library by its binding committee. You know the profession has a style of binding peculiar to itself — a tan-colored sheep or calf of an "underdone pie-crust" color, as I have lately heard it called. I was astonished to see fully

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one-eighth of the books with the hollow backs broken at one joint and pointing out at right angles from their proper position, like so many indexes or open doors. I was shown the rottenness of the leather crumbling into dust and was asked the reason. I informed the committee that the covers of law books are generally washed with oxalic acid to give them a clean appearance, and the binder is so careless a chemist that its strength is seldom tested with accuracy; that this, with the heat and gas of the library, soon renders the leather as rotten as blotting-paper. This, then, as one of the committee observed, is one of the tricks of the trade. I recommended a morocco back, and with a view to suiting their taste in color I bound them a volume in a tan-colored morocco, but I fear the few extra cents of expense caused them to resolve to continue sheepskin, and even skiver sheep at that. I know that if morocco backs were used in the binding of volumes in all our public libraries the binding bills would be less in the long run and the volumes less often absent from their shelves to the binder's. Repeated

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rebinding is destructive to books. Library committees as a rule adopt a false cheapness. When Dr. Cogswell was organizing the Astor Library, over thirty-five years ago, he insisted on having a considerable number of the volumes he collected bound in blue skiver backs and corners. Low prices he certainly attained: he afterwards prided himself on getting so many books bound for so little money. How long these bindings stood I know not; if any of them are still intact they must have been very little used. Sheepskin is therefore not durable for the covers of books that are to receive much usage, nor is it suitable for elegant finish.

Of late years a skin has been introduced for bookbinding called a Persian, or bastard; in the substance it is as strong as goatskin and resists tearing, but on the surface is tender like sheep and shows many imperfections. It is by far a better skin than sheep for school and library books. It is very little higher in price than roan. Calfskin, especially the colored calf of English manufacture, is very beautiful. It is soft and pleasant to the

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hand; its delicate tints and brilliant colors, with contrasting colored labels for titles, add variety and much beauty to the bookcase. True, it soils from the moist hand and is not in strength as desirable as we would wish, but is nevertheless an excellent leather for the covers of duodecimos and is very suitable for ordinary standard literature. I will say here that I do not recommend polished calf or tree-marbled calf as superior in wear to the plain; the covers of both are more liable to warp and show scratching and rubbing. A few samples of these styles are well to possess.

Russia seems to be a cowhide—certainly not the buffalo hide I was led in my apprenticeship to believe. It is of the same nature as calfskin—liable to crack; in fact, is more brittle than English calf and its red color fades very quickly. It has nothing but its scent to recommend it, and it certainly has not the quality to resist insects, as many suppose. In my youth it was very expensive and consequently held in great esteem for strength and durability; hence many a noble folio got clad

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in it that their possessors now wish had been in morocco.

No skin for fine binding is equal to that of the goat. Webster says morocco is chiefly from the goat, though a cheaper kind is made from sheep; and I see also a similar definition in Stormonth's new dictionary. He says morocco is a fine kind of grained leather prepared from goatskin and often from sheepskin. These definitions are misleading: morocco is goatskin and goatskin only; sheepskin is used only for an imitation. The difference existing in the ordinary turkey morocco is simply a difference in the breed of the animal, the grain, stoutness, and quality depending on the locality of the breed.

Levant morocco is the skin of the monarch breed of goat, the skin *de luxe* for bookbinding, superior to all other skins in strength and grain and the beauty of finish which its surface is capable of taking. If the breed came originally from the Levant, which we are led to believe, the great demand for it lately has no doubt extended its geographical limit, and some Cape and other district goatskins are now

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undoubtedly used; one satisfaction in this is that the strength is just as great.

The ordinary *turkey* morocco is so called from the pebble grain which it takes, and to distinguish it from the smooth and straight-grained morocco that was in use before its introduction. It has all the requisite qualities for fine and durable binding: it is stronger than any other kind of skin excepting levant, and when properly tanned is very difficult to tear; its surface when grained hard will resist wear longer than other leathers, while its appearance is always rich and satisfactory. Bind, therefore, your volumes as often as you can in turkey morocco, and your choice ones in levant. For your better guidance I repeat, that colored skiver will answer for books to which you seldom refer, and for volumes you desire to bind at a low price; it will even answer for your periodicals. Calfskin is best for standard literature, especially volumes of the duodecimo size. Russia should be used sparingly, just enough to vary the library; it is particularly appropriate for bibliography. But for all books of constant reference, like

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cyclopædias, all large and heavy volumes, all fine art works, all books of choice value, use morocco, and all your rare and precious treasures cover in levant and have it crushed.

The selection of color is another vexed question. Some are in favor of classification by colors, such as red for military, green for botany, brown for divinity, and so on. This is largely a matter of fancy and might work well in a mixed library, but there are sore and perplexing hindrances to the best laid schemes. Others again favor sober colors, are quiet in their taste, and think to make the least offense or mistake by the selection of quiet browns. I have seen the error of both these. The late Thomas P. Barton, to whom Richard Grant White dedicated his Shakspere, told me that the greatest error he ever made in his library was in deciding that his Shaksperian collection, which was very large, should all be bound in *red* morocco. He did not see the expense, risk, and trouble he was resolving upon. For instance, so large a collection is made through many years of one's life and supplied from distant

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points and unforeseen circumstances. He told me he often had to order the purchase of a Shaksperian work from the sale of a celebrated library in Europe, and when he received it he often found it gorgeously bound in purple or green; but in order to carry out his whim the beautiful cover had to be torn off and the volume rebound in red to match his collection. And even then, as we stood in front of over a thousand volumes on Shakspere, he pointed out after all his pains the various shades of red he had been obliged to accept. "Never again," said he, "will I arbitrarily determine a certain color for a class of literature."

Again, the late George T. Strong, who was a gentleman of very quiet taste, began his collection with a preference for sober browns. Antique calf and brown morocco were his usual orders. After several years he moved into a new house, and allowed his cabinet-maker to build his bookcases of black walnut, the then prevailing taste in cabinet work, without thinking of the effect of his brown bindings; he told me that when his books had been placed in the

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cases he went to his library expecting the most pleasing effect, but instead was overcome with the most depressing sensation of disappointment. From that time he ordered me never to bind any book of his, religious or not, in brown, but in red, green, or any other bright color, that he might brighten up the dead effect of his library. Here an ardent and persevering collector, from indulging a severe, quiet taste, had destroyed what would otherwise have produced great pleasure. The most satisfactory determination in the selection of color is not to be arbitrary. Favor one color for certain literature if you like, but do not let it control you; favor bright colors rather than dark, and largely encourage crimson. When I argued in favor of the latter color to a gentleman who was much of a wag, by asserting that the volumes in the Bibliothèque Royale were mostly red, he said he hoped they were.

As another instance of arbitrary taste in color of binding I will mention that it is usual to put *In Memoriam* volumes in black or dark brown. A lady eminent for her benevolence and devotion to the

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Church was astounded at my suggestion of crimson for the cover of a volume she had collected as a memorial of her father; but on my stating the fact that the clergy had always favored crimson for their church books and pulpits she decided at once, and one of the handsomest memorial books I ever bound is covered in crimson levant richly decorated. To my taste the very handsomest memorial books I ever bound were for a lady in Boston, in white vellum inlaid with black kid in Etruscan design. We are often very set in our notions of taste and think we are right; but experience often proves we are wrong. Notice how almost geographically our taste in color is limited. In New York our houses are mostly brown, in Philadelphia red, in Boston grey. In Italy books are bound mostly in white parchment, in Paris in red morocco; in England royal purple was the favorite tint, and in America it is brown. Of one hundred dozen of morocco that I use ninety dozen are brown, so prevailing is the taste here for that color.

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II

THE perfect covering of the volume is a very important and difficult branch of the work. A great deal of time is spent in covering a volume in levant as it should be, and hence much time can be saved in covering it carelessly; excellence of workmanship is an item of cost that must be estimated by the patron.

Preparatory to the covering of the volume the back of it has to be lined. There is much diversity of opinion regarding hollow, or spring, backs and tight backs. It is recorded that hollow backs were first used in the eighteenth century, but the Mazarin Bible that we saw here the other evening, that was said to be in its original binding, had a hollow back. It certainly was the first I ever saw on a fifteenth or sixteenth century binding. I have always looked on the hollow back as useful for only one purpose, and that is the prevention of the wrinkling of the leather on the back. Though by a

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properly constructed muslin hollow proper strength can be given, yet I have always looked upon a tight back as more durable, especially where morocco is the leather used. Morocco does not show wrinkling. On the proper lining of the back the durability and flexibility largely depend. If you take a book without any lining on its back and open it, you will find it very flexible; but a very little use in this state would develop its weakness. Therefore a muslin lining must be used to give the back strength, and two pieces if the paper of the volume is heavy; though recollect that every additional lining renders the back less flexible. Usually a single lining and the leather cover is sufficient to insure both strength and flexibility. This is what is called a tight back, and is by far the best and most durable.

For calf binding a hollow back is customary, though Bedford often made his calf bindings with tight backs. Were tight backs used for our public libraries none would be seen in the condition of the law library I have mentioned; that condition is only possible with hollow backs.

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In all large volumes, even in octavos, where price of binding will permit, a narrow joint of morocco should be used inside; paper, as it is now made, is not strong enough for the constant working of the board in the joint. To obtain this, order narrow leather joints. A book, when neatly and cleanly covered, is in a very satisfactory condition without any finishing or decoration. Handle it; open it. Do the boards open freely and close flatly and solidly? Is the joint square, the board evenly on the top of it? Run your thumb along it, and if flat and square, without any ridges, so far well; and now open the book. Here I will detain you a moment to instruct you how to open it. Hold the book with its back on a smooth or covered table; let the front board down, then the other, holding the leaves in one hand while you open a few leaves at the back, then a few at the front, and so go on, alternately opening back and front, gently pressing open the sections till you reach the center of the volume. Do this two or three times and you will obtain the best results. Open the volume violently or care-

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lessly in any one place and you will likely break the back and cause a start in the leaves. Never force the back; if it does not yield to gentle opening rely upon it the back is too tightly or strongly lined. A connoisseur many years ago, an excellent customer of mine, who thought he knew perfectly how to handle books, came into my office when I had an expensive binding just brought from the bindery ready to be sent home; he, before my eyes, took hold of the volume, and tightly holding the leaves in each hand, instead of allowing them free play, violently opened it in the center and exclaimed, "How beautifully your bindings open." I almost fainted. He had broken the back of the volume, and it had to be rebound.

Having now described the preparing, the forwarding, and the covering of the volume, I now declare the book in this condition is bound, and he who has skillfully mastered these various processes through which the volume has passed deserves the name of binder; he who is called upon to decorate it, finisher. At present the custom is the reverse: the finisher

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or decorator is credited with being the binder, whereas he has done none of the binding. This is where the critics and connoisseurs err. The decorators of ancient binding were goldsmiths, enamellers, etc., and the finishers are really book decorators, not book binders. Is it just to ignore the workmen who have bound the book and made it serviceable to our use, who have prepared it accurately, given it solidity, strength, and flexibility, who have shaped it in perfect trueness and dressed it neatly with a cover of taste and appropriateness, and credit only the decorator? Is it proper to say that Francis Bedford, the truest forwarder of modern times, is only a second-class binder, because a Parisian can surpass him in delicacy of tooling or decoration? I say no. Value true and good forwarding, and credit the workman in his true merit if you wish to have pleasure in reading your books; but if you wish to have them "Potiphar" like, merely like so many wooden blocks to show, then procure Parisian binding so rigid in the back that you cannot open it though decorated exquisitely. I do not wish here

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to be misunderstood. I do not desire to lessen the high appreciation which book finishing has and deserves, but simply to demand credit for that branch on which depends the important principles that constitute good binding—solidity, strength, flexibility, trueness, and the skillful manipulation of leather.

There is little satisfaction in having a book elaborately finished if it is not well forwarded. I know full well that finishing is an art, and that forwarding is simply a handicraft; but I know by a long experience that it is a very difficult one and deserving of its just honors.

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III

WE now come to the finishing of the volume. Finishing is the decoration of the cover. The decoration of books has for ages constituted one of the principal branches of ornamental art. Mr. Libri asserts that "Ancient figured monuments often show personages holding in their hands books of which the covers are ornamented in various styles. In the Christian monuments of the primitive church not only are Jesus Christ and the Evangelists generally represented with books in their hands, but also other saints are portrayed bearing books bound very similarly to those of the present day, the sides of which are generally ornamented in different ways." It is an art that has engaged the abilities of the most distinguished artists in all ages. It has also at times, when other forms of decoration have failed, been the object that has kept alive and advanced art in its decorative forms, and much

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of the goldsmith's best early work can be found on the covers of valuable books. De Quincey, in reference to its connection with the fine arts, places bookbinding, printing of books, coining and making of gold and silver plate, on an isthmus, connecting them on one side with the vast continent of merely mechanical arts and on the other side with the far smaller continent of fine arts. And Mr. Wheatley says in regard to this remark of De Quincey's that "this is true in a double sense: for in one point of view every good binder who tries to work out an idea is an artist, whether the result is plain or ornamental; and in another the finished side of some richly tooled book is as much a work of art as any picture or drawing."

Were it required of me to treat the subject of book decoration in a purely art sense I should feel myself quite unequal to the task. I lay no claim to a knowledge of art in its higher sense, but I will endeavor to present the subject from a practical standpoint as I have forwarding, that you may be made acquainted with the practical principles

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which constitute the art and be enabled to better appreciate its difficulties.

The three usual styles of decoration are blind tooling, gilt tooling, and illuminated, or inlaid, work. Blind tooling is the impression of the tools upon the leather without gold or color. It is produced by the tools, slightly warmed, being impressed upon the leather when damped, and by the same impression being often repeated to brighten its effect. It is the oldest style of decoration on leather, and at first was of the simplest description, though later many beautiful designs were used. Many specimens of this style of decoration are seen in old vellum, parchment, and hogskin bindings. In the earliest the impressions have undoubtedly been made by a single stamp, and later these are found duplicated and multiplied. Mr. Libri says that it would not be difficult to prove that these stamps on leather for book covers preceded every other impression on paper of figures engraved on wood or metal. Blind tooling is very suitable for the decoration of old books and is now appropriately called antique.

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The more usual style of tooling is in gold, and we all know how rich it looks, how decorative it is to the cover, and how durable it can be done. This style of decoration is said to have had an Eastern origin. A great deal in bookbinding is credited to the East, and it would be interesting to have it traced to some foundation—whether the dyeing of leather and the introduction of morocco as well as gilt tooling really originated in Arabia and Persia.

Wherever gilt tooling took its rise, it seems in Europe to have been first practiced in Italy. It is so beautiful a decoration and is now so extensively used that its origin and early history should certainly be investigated and established. Gold tooling produces a rich effect more especially on certain colors, such as crimson, purple, and green. It exemplifies the design more effectively than blind tooling, especially when the tools are delicate, like the fine dotted tools of the style of Le Gascon. All delicate tooling must be done in gold to obtain its proper effect. A broad border of Gascon tooling in gold, though in character as delicate as the finest lace, is marvelously rich

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in effect. The best result of gilt tooling can only be secured by first blinding in the design—that is, impressing the tools in blind prior to gilding; then a solidity, a brightness, and an exactness are better obtained. Much inferior work is now done abroad, for the sake of cheapness, without blinding in, which can be best detected by observing a shiny stickiness on the surface of the leather, which in time will turn gray, and by a ragged finish to the tooling.

The illuminated style of decoration was most likely derived from the beautiful colored designs mixed with gold of Persian and Arabian MSS. The Maioli, or Italian, designs are especially adapted for illumination. In the earliest examples of this style the colors were painted on the leather; but the superior modern method is to inlay with different colors of morocco or kid. This is, when well done, the richest style of book decoration the art has ever reached.

It is important to bear in mind that the limit of book-finishing as a decorative art is necessarily very narrow from the arbitrary character of the brass engraved tools the finisher uses to work his designs.

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In some shops they are very limited, and even in the largest the number affords but little variety. We all copy one from the other; a copyright of design is unknown among us. It is right then to judge of the finisher's work by the limited character of the tools he has to execute his designs. We judge of tapestry recollecting it is the work of the needle; and of the steel engraving by its being the work of the graver. It might be easy for an artist with his pencil to improve to his taste the designs of the binder, but if the latter cannot work the designs with his tools it would be useless. Suffice it for our present purpose to explain that these tools consist of scrolls of various sizes and styles, of upright figures, rosettes, stars, circles, etc., with which, by the aid of straight and curved lines technically called gouges, the finisher works his various designs.

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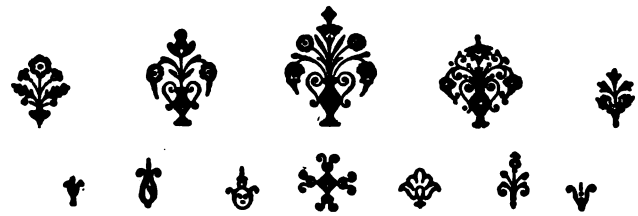
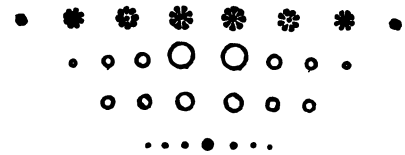
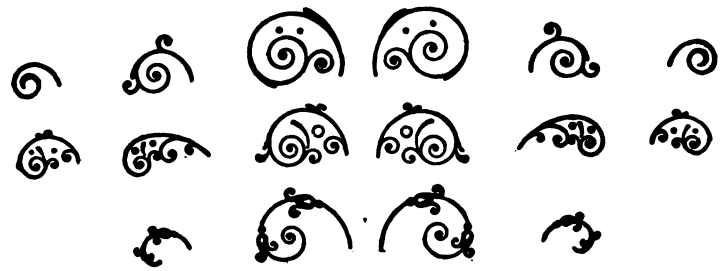


UPRIGHT FIGURES.

STRAIGHT LINES AND GOUGES.



STARS, CIRCLES, AND DOTS.



SCROLLS.

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The quality of his work depends largely also on the fineness of these engraved tools, and this is no small reason why the Parisians excel both the English and ourselves, their engravers cutting deeper, smoother, and more delicately than the English and our own engravers. It is difficult to get hand tools cut decently well, the engraving of plates for common work paying our engravers so much better.

It has been well stated by Mr. Wheatley that "it is hopeless to expect the art to revive until means are taken to raise the standard of appreciation in which binding is held. There are few connoisseurs who understand the principles of artistic binding, and many men and women who would be ashamed to admire a bad picture will admire a cheaply bound book by inferior workmen." I myself have been astonished that so few women—in America I know none—are encouragers of the art; they certainly could not bestow their taste on anything that would do them more credit, or as a study give them more lasting satisfaction. That you may

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be better qualified to judge I will describe the difference between the decoration of common and first-class work.

In the decoration of modern binding there are two distinctive processes: the one called stamping or blocking, the other hand-finishing. Stamping is done with an entire engraved plate and stamped upon the cover by one impression of the press. The design may be just as beautiful as that of a hand-tooled binding, but the impression is multiplied on hundreds and thousands of books and has much the quality and value that an engraving has to an original drawing. Its value is nothing, because numbers possess it. The appearance of the workmanship also, to the practiced eye, is blocky and coarse.

But first-class hand-tooling has the merit of having been designed and executed for your especial book. The design is seldom exactly duplicated; the tooling is more delicate, and has a freeness and charm, as though in comparison it was traced upon the cover, which stamped work cannot imitate.

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The process of working a design in the best manner on morocco is very tedious, more so than even connoisseurs imagine. First, the design is made on paper, then impressed with the tools through the paper on to the leather; then the paper is removed, and the design again gone over with the tools to make the impression sharp and clear; then, after washing, sizing, and laying on the gold leaf, the design is gone over for the fourth time before one side of the cover is completed. This having to be repeated on the other side of the volume, and the back also tooled, will afford some idea of the labor in executing the finest hand-tooling. Better work than we are now doing will never be done till the book-buyers can discriminate between the cheap work of the stamping press, encouraged by publishers for their editions, and the artistic effort of hand labor to produce rare and hence valuable book decoration.

Go to the finishing room often; see your work in progress; mark well the careful and patient effort of the workman to develop his design; better still

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if you can discern the difficulties he encounters in harshness or greasiness of leather, and you will then appreciate more highly a good piece of work. But be careful and not get, by any thoughtless remark to the workman, such a reproof as old Dr. Vinton received. He had ventured in to see his books in progress, and the finisher had a quantity of them laid over with gold-leaf previous to tooling; the doctor, horrified at the sight of his books, made some annoying expression of "gingerbread appearance" to the workman, who turned upon him and said, "Excuse me, sir, but I was about to be hasty." "In what way?" asked the doctor. "I was about to say," the workman replied, "that fools and children should never see their work half done!"

The qualifications required to make a first-class finisher are of a higher order of merit than that of the forwarder; the one is largely ideal, the other practical. He must be possessed of artistic taste and be somewhat of a draughtsman, and have some knowledge of the standard styles and designs of his art, also a right judgment of appropriateness; and in

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addition to these gifts of the mind he must have the more practical ability to work his designs on all leathers with accuracy, solidity, and brightness. To excel he will need great patience and to have a perfect love of his art, an admiration for what he does akin to that of the painter and those who occupy the higher field of art: he will never succeed if he is a mere bread-and-butter workman. These are no mean qualifications, and they are very rarely to be found in the youth that offers himself to the bookbinding trade. When a youth has the art taste, and ability, he usually seeks employment of a higher grade than bookbinding, and it is only by chance that the trade possesses the few it has. The ability to design is very rare among finishers, and I do not believe there are more than six in New York who can even work any intricate pattern with fair ability. In London I question if the number is greater in proportion to the population; and in Paris, where the art flourishes most, where the patronage is encouraging, and the workmen have superior advantages, I doubt if the number of finishers qualified to

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work intricate designs in first-class manner exceeds twenty. This fact is worthy of consideration, that you may properly appreciate first-class work when you see it, and understand more fully the difficulties of the art.

It is very certain in my mind that none of the working finishers of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries designed any of the examples we so much admire; otherwise they would have worked them with greater precision. No artist would have been satisfied in so inaccurately exemplifying his own design. But it is quite likely that some of the seventeenth century and later styles were the designs of the working finishers of the time, because these designs are mostly a combination of tools, and quite within the ability of the trade.

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IV

HOW shall we bind our books? is a common question with our collectors, but, How shall we decorate them? is an equally important one. At present the style of decoration is usually left to the binder, hence, as he often studies convenience rather than appropriateness, the result is often a disappointment to the customer. Dreadful mistakes have been made in this way. Literal copies of old designs have been used for modern literature, and ornaments selected quite inappropriate to the subject or date of the publication. I, therefore, recognize the great importance of stating briefly a few points that will help to satisfactory conclusions. I hold that a study of the several styles of design hitherto used in the decoration of bindings through the centuries should be made both by collector and binder. It will certainly be a great help to a solution of the question if the leading features or characteristics of the several styles are better understood.

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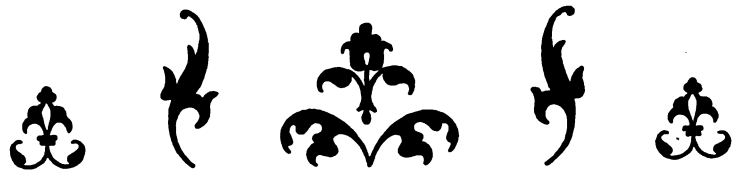

THE ALDINE.

The ornaments used by Aldus and other early Italian printers were of solid face, Arabic in shape, without any shading whatever. They undoubtedly preferred this solid ornament because it gave strong color and richness to the page, and for this reason it has retained favor with printers even to our time. The binder's Aldine ornaments are copies in shape and design from the early printers, and have the same especial feature of solid face; hence, when worked brightly in gold on leather, no style of ornament he uses presents a stronger or richer effect. The ornaments were generally used by the early printers independent of gouges or curved lines, by

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a repetition of the same ornament forming very effective borders and bands. In the binder's published examples of this style the composition of the design is generally a diamond and square, with semicircles in double outline intersected and the ornaments displayed in the corners and centers, but less formal designs have been made in flowing scrolls with the same style of ornament. This style of design is most appropriate for early printed books, and the binder will err in giving its true character if he mixes any shaded ornament with it.

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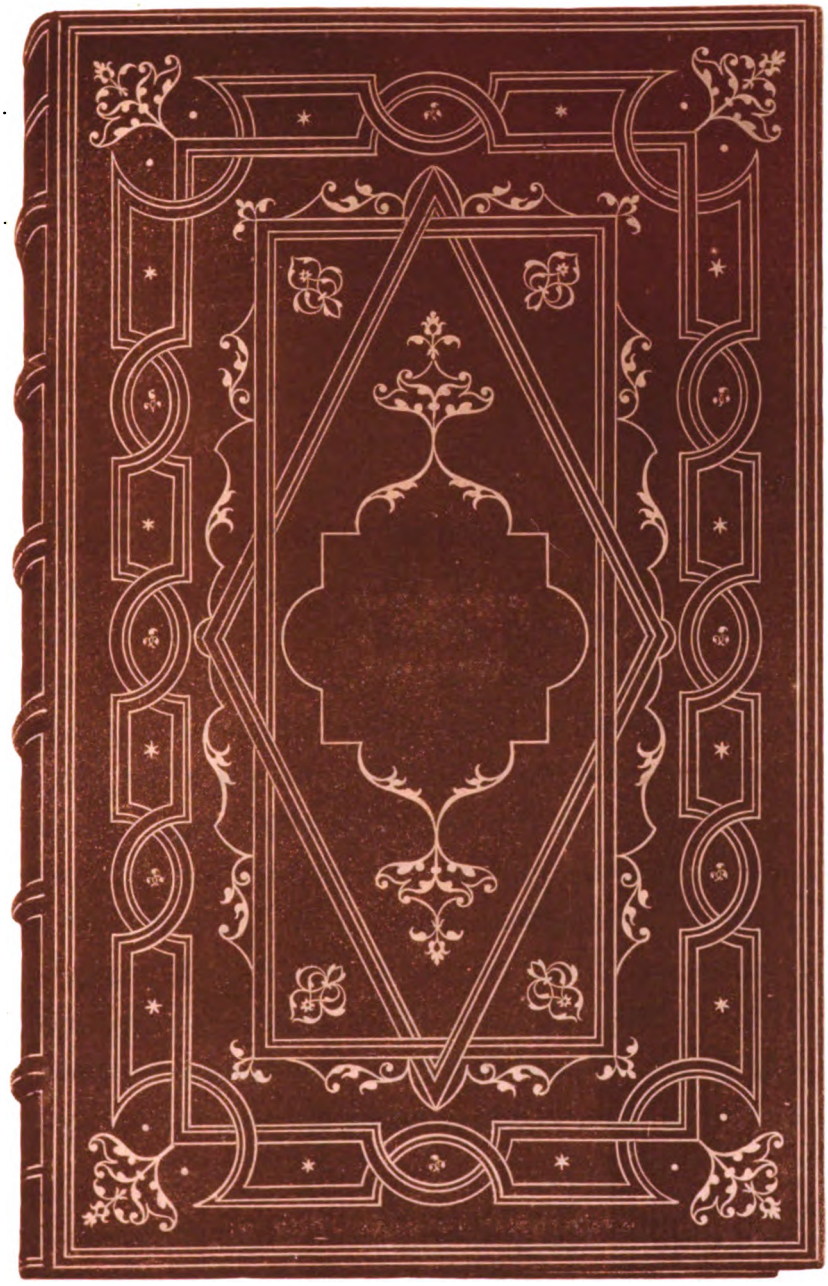

ALDINE.

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THE MAIOLI, OR ITALIAN.

Thomas Maioli, from whom this style takes its name, lived in Italy during the first half of the sixteenth century. He must have been, from the richness of the decoration of his books, a most liberal patron of binders. Grolier, with a similar love of books, made his acquaintance while French ambassador to Italy, and quickly recognized the great superiority of his bindings, for on his return to France he took several Italian workmen with him. I think every art student will admit that the Maioli designs show greater artistic merit than the Grolier. The published examples of the Maioli and Grolier designs from their respective libraries often render it difficult

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to determine the respective styles. If the student, however, will bear in mind that Grolier during his twenty years' residence in Italy was dependent on Italian workmanship, and, doubtless, on his return to France imitated the Italian style, he will be the better able to distinguish the French-Grolier from the Maioli-Italian. He must remember that bindings with the Maioli motto are clearly and only Italian, whereas those with the Grolier motto are both Italian and French. I think these facts are necessary to remember, because many of the examples published from the Grolier library are of the same type of design as the Maioli. Also, as Maioli preceded Grolier, we must credit the former with the style of design his bindings exemplify. Bearing these facts in mind, we will be able to notice more precisely a distinction in style. The example I have selected is clearly Maioli's, and is a design of flowing scroll-work graceful in every curve, interlacing freely with the framework as though traced with a master hand: in fact, there is not a defective curve in the design. The framework is less the character of the

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MAIOLI.

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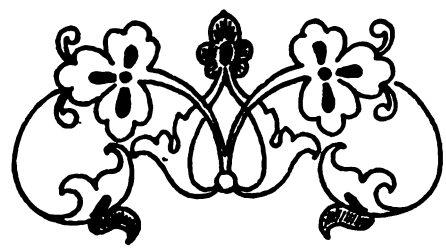
design than the scroll-work, whereas in the Grolier examples of positive French type the geometrical interlaced framework is more the design than the scroll-work. The principal features of a Maioli design, I claim, are a perfect curve in scroll-work where it is used, a framework of flowing curved lines more than of figures of geometrical shape, ornaments of Moresque character, mostly in outline, sometimes azured, and an enrichment of part of the field with a studding of gold dots. Wherever this latter feature is seen in book design I think it should be credited to the Italian.



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THE GROLIER.

Jean Grolier, after his return from twenty years' residence in Italy, became the founder of fine book-binding in France, and he so generously encouraged it that Paris and Lyons soon became the rivals of Venice in the art. As we have stated that on his return he took Italian workmen with him, so does the style he promoted bear some of the features of his contemporary and friend Maioli. The similarity consists in a framework and the use of the same Moresque-shaped ornaments. The difference is in the geometrical composition of the interlaced frame-work by straight lines and semicircles, instead of flowing curved lines, and in the placing of the orna-

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GROLIER.

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ments in spaces and carrying the gouge lines to meet them without due regard to perfect curve. Therefore, a geometrical framework, and a skeleton form of scroll-work with Moresque-shaped ornaments, are the features of a Grolier design of the French type. A Grolier design is simpler and easier of execution by the binder than a Maioli. Modern examples of the Grolier style are rendered more beautiful by the introduction of perfect scroll-work and Renaissance instead of Moresque ornaments.

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THE ÈVE STYLE.

Under the patronage of De Thou, Nicholas and Clovis Ève so much improved on the Grolier type of design that they are justly entitled to the credit of originating a new style. The geometrical layout of their designs is perfect, the surrounding of the compartments with scrolls and branches of laurel original, and the covering of the entire field of the cover with delicate tooling is the perfection of richness in book decoration. They adopted graceful scrolls and small floral figures in place of the Moresque characters of Grolier's time which were so entirely superseded that they are seldom used in book ornamentation but to exemplify the Grolier style. The quantity of compartments in the com-

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ÈVE.

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position of the design, with their beautiful variety of shape, and the laurel-branch decoration which surrounds them, are the distinguishing features of this style. I know of no feature of book decoration that has received more favor than the laurel-branch as introduced by Nicholas Ève. The style was practiced at the end of the sixteenth and beginning of the seventeenth centuries. It is quite appropriate to modern books, and no richer can be chosen.

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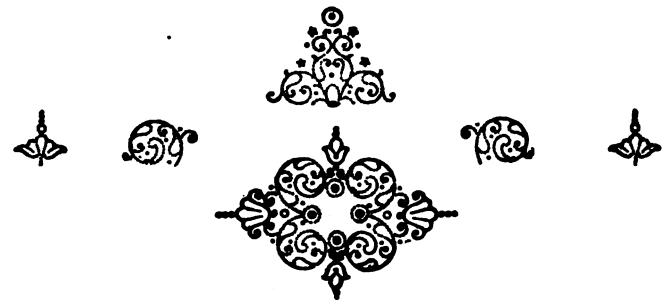

LE GASCON.

This is a style which can never be mistaken. Using a similar framework to the Èves, Le Gascon made a novel change in scroll ornaments used for filling in the compartments by making the face of them fine dots instead of solid line. In addition to novelty, it gave great delicacy to the treatment of book decoration. From the time of Aldus the ornaments had gradually been getting finer, until now they had reached the extreme point of delicateness.

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LE GASCON.

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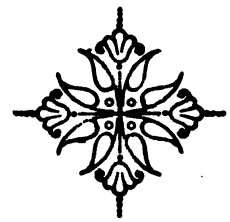
In the latter part of his career, Le Gascon abandoned even the solid-line framework and made up his designs by the dotted ornaments alone. When this style of delicate ornament is worked in borders it gives the effect of lace and is called a lace or *dentelle* border—in my opinion constituting the best use to which this Gascon style of ornament can be put. When worked by an accurate finisher no tooling is, in a delicate sense, richer on crushed levant. Some doubt that the workman who introduced this style, and who was attached to Clovis Ève's house, was named Le Gascon; but, nevertheless, the name of the style will ever remain "Le Gascon."



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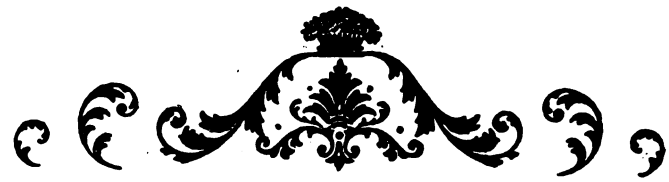

DEROME.

About a century later than Le Gascon's time the style of decoration had changed into scrolls of a leafy character, with a more solid face, though lightly shaded by the graver, which I think is properly designated the Renaissance style of ornament. It is best exemplified by Derome in borders, Vandyke in design. The style is simple but rich in effect, and is within the talent of any good finisher. It is useful and appropriate for large illustrated works, and the solid character of the tools is well suited for grained morocco. The English Harleian style is somewhat similar, though the ornaments of the latter are more formal and are varied with acorns and cones in the terminations.

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ROGER PAYNE.

In the latter half of the eighteenth century Roger Payne lived and devoted a poverty-stricken life to a love and practice of the art of bookbinding. He was in himself both binder and finisher, carefully selecting his material with regard to its appropriateness, and adopting a style of decoration strikingly his own. The ornamental tools he used, which are said to have been designed and engraved by himself, are original in form and easily identified. They are free and flowing in stem and flower, never stiff and formal like the Harleian. His designs show little variety and are limited in scope, but are rendered rich in effect by studding the field with gold dots. His

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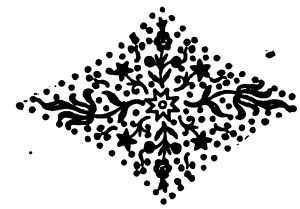
efforts, however, were always original, never copied; and I believe it was this, rather than excellence in the composition of his designs, that has begot him favorable mention wherever bookbinding is named. He deserves great credit for originating a style and displaying much taste and pains in the execution of his work. It is very appropriate on straight-grained morocco, which in his day was the leather in vogue; but to me his style seems suitable for decorating books in the English language only. No artist could study his subject more faithfully than Roger Payne did the binding intrusted to him, and no workman ever rendered his bill with greater conscientiousness. So low were his prices, no wonder he died in poverty and was buried at a namesake's cost.



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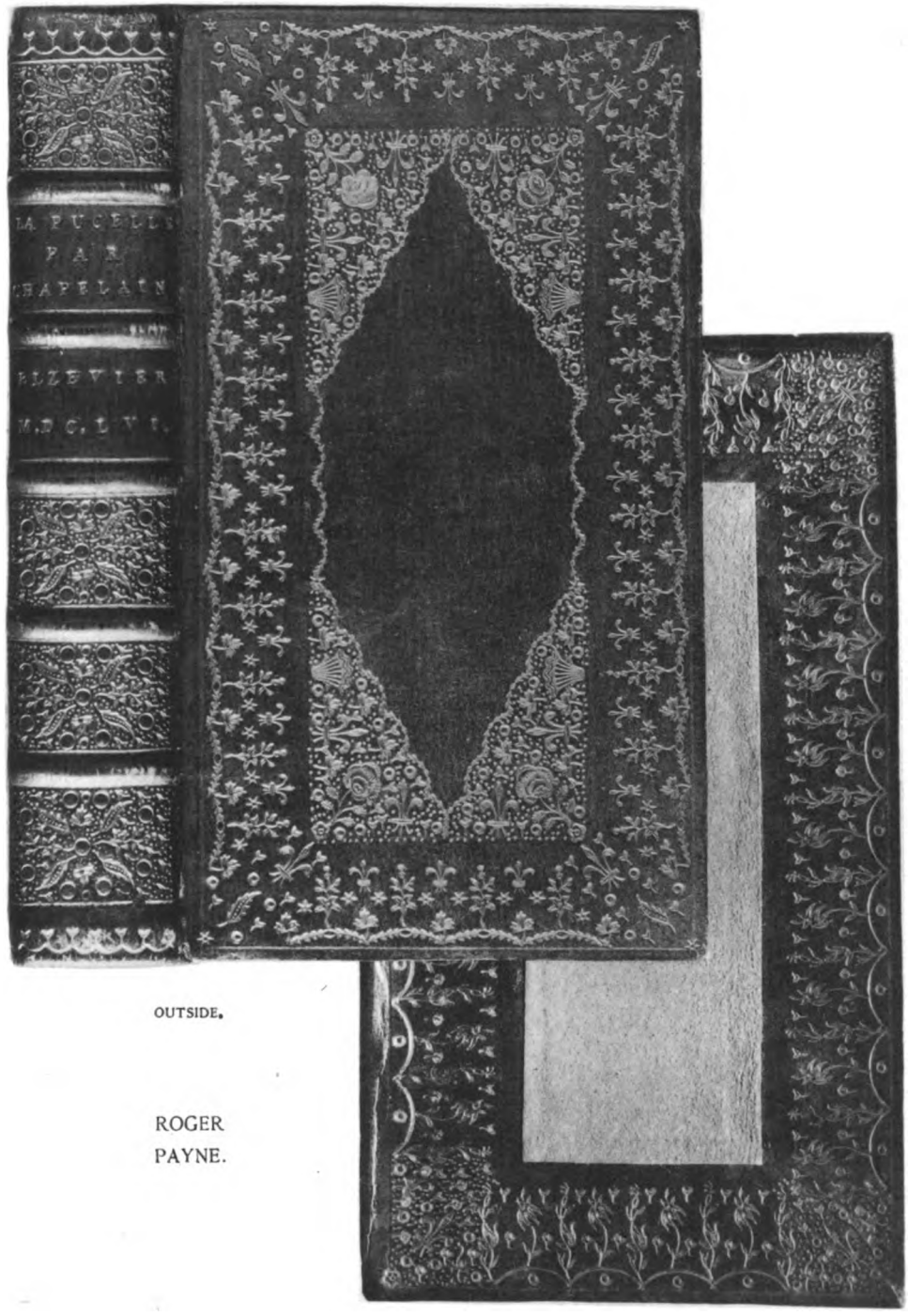

OUTSIDE.

ROGER
PAYNE.

INSIDE.

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JANSENISTE.

Though exemplifying styles of decoration, it may be proper to describe a style which depends for its popularity on an absence of decoration. It takes its name from the followers of Jansenius, Bishop of Ypres, who were advocates of plainness in worship, and opposed to the decoration of the altar. In book-binding it is characterized by entire absence of line or ornament. It permits decoration on the inside of the cover, but demands absolute plainness on the outside. It is, however, only appropriate for levant morocco, because it is dependent for its beauty on the polished surface which this leather is capable of taking in the process of crushing. It is exceedingly suitable to a large class of literature that, though worthy of good, substantial binding, is not appropriate to decoration.

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These are the principal styles from which finishers draw their inspiration of design. They are far too briefly and inadequately described, but the limits of a lecture will not permit of greater amplification. I would discourage the copying by binders of the examples of the originals, but rather advise variations of them. The French are multiplying copies of them very rapidly, while they are fully capable of originating a new decorative treatment.

The principles to be observed in finishing are:

First, Appropriateness of design.

Second, Accuracy, solidity, and brightness of workmanship.

The first principle is a much neglected one, and from the great variety of the subjects of books a very difficult one to strictly carry out. But honest efforts at appropriateness in binding can generally be made by determining the style of binding best suited to the use to which the book is to be put, the proper leather and its suitable color, edges cut or uncut, gilt or plain; but more especially will the

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quantity and style of the decoration mark the appropriateness of the binding. The style of tooling should be of the period of the book's publication, or somewhat in the character of the subject treated; also finished plain or elaborate according to value or rarity of the volume. When these simple efforts at appropriateness are made by the binder, he is not far wrong even in an art sense.

Appropriate decoration, however, is of the highest importance. Better keep the volume as it comes from the coverer, nude of ornament, than gild upon it tooling which is inappropriate. True decoration renders the binding more beautiful; it has no right to be attempted if it does not. Our binders, and often good binders, err dreadfully in this particular; a certain amount of gilt tooling they think necessary, and this they often put on without any regard to the character of the volume. Surely the aim and purpose of all decoration is to render the article more beautiful, and this, I repeat, can only be done by appropriate ornament.

It is very easy for writers on the subject to lay

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down the A B C rule of "birds and insects for books on natural history, flowers for those on botany and the like, so that the book may be recognized at a glance"; but correct as this rule may appear it would be a very foolish one to follow to any great extent. In a large library there would be a great many books decorated with birds; and though the bird indicated the subject it would not the author—an equally important point. You might take a Yarrell for a Morris, and so on. Then flowers are appropriate for more than books on botany. No; use flowers and birds, subserviently however, at times to help make your design more appropriate, but not so prominently that you will recognize your volumes at a glance. An ardent lover of his books will identify them by other indications as easily as he will the features of a familiar friend.

In this room there is a very beautiful design of Zaehnsdorf's for a copy of L'Ombrelle; it has a large representation of a parasol in the center, I suppose to make the design more appropriate and help its identification, as he advances this theory in

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his treatise. To me it is an objection to an otherwise beautiful design (perhaps it was so done to satisfy an idea of his customer); but had there been two or three small parasols picturesquely interwoven in the tooling it would, to me, be more appropriate and better in character with the illustrations of the artist. I have said I think appropriateness in the decoration of books depends much on the character of the tools selected. In too many binderies the styles of tools are indiscriminately mixed—the Aldine, the Grolier, the Harleian, and the Renaissance; and whichever fits the space required, that is selected and used by the general finisher. This is what is justly complained of. Every finisher should have his tools strictly sorted, and select for his decoration the style of tools best suited to the period of his book. The bird, the insect, or the flower will not make the design appropriate with carelessly selected tools.

The second principle involved in fine finishing is the masterly execution of the tooling. It was in this our earlier craftsmen failed—their tooling is

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very inexact. Some of the tools are burnt in—the impressions deep into the leather, while others are faint and on the surface; this result of the tooling is so unequal in impression and so inexact in execution that the value is simply in the design. But this will not meet modern requirements; the impression of the tools, however numerous, must be as equal as though made by one impression, and every join made with strict accuracy and trueness. The workman who fails in this fails in producing a first-class specimen of work.

I have no doubt the tooling on early binding was done while the leather was damp, for easier working. Some of the foreign binders to-day, in order to meet lower prices, have been lately doing the same thing—tooling elaborate designs in a damp state without blinding in, thus gaining a great advantage over the honest, careful workman. The result is dull and inexact work. Customers and binders alike must recollect this fact—the best tooling cannot be done without the necessary cost of expensive labor, and no binder can long exist

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without being paid for that outlay. Another fact that should be particularly borne in mind is that second-class work is no great prize to possess and has no special value. I speak in the interest of all: the finisher cannot work his designs *accurately*, *solidly*, *brightly*, and *clearly* without blinding in, and if the customer requires the best work he must expect to pay for the best manner of doing it. Gold and silver is appreciated by a sterling mark. I wish that first-class workmanship had to stand the same test and pass the same ordeal.

It is not an easy matter to tool accurately. Each tool is put down separately, and should be in line one with the other. Take a dentelle border: if accurately worked the point of each tool will be directly in line with the corresponding one opposite. No design depends more upon accuracy than a dentelle or lace border; tool it inaccurately and you destroy its beauty. Take a Grolier design: the intersected lines must be straight, equal in width of space, and exactly mitred; the join of the scrolls and the gouges must be unobserved.

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Solid tooling shows the skilled and perfect workman. This is justly claimed as one of Trautz's superior qualifications; it certainly is one of superior merit. The faint impression of a tool is not permanent; it is "half out," as the finishers term it, and they justly hold it as a proof of inferior workmanship—burnt-in tooling as an unpardonable fault. Brightness of tooling is the perfection of solid work. It depends on the temperate heat of the tool and the proper dryness of the leather. The work that I saw of Trautz's in Mr. Turner's library, London, where I handled a dozen specimens, was chiefly remarkable for these two qualities, solidity and brightness. There was not an intricate or superior design on any of the specimens. Mr. Turner informed me that Trautz excused himself for that by pleading lack of time.

I believe the only fault of Bedford's work was the lack of a first-class finisher. The backs of his books are all tooled and lettered well, but his tooled sides are not accurate and are far from being as bright and clean as they should be. Had he got his finish-

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ing done as well as his forwarding he would have been the best binder of his day. His misfortune was that he was not a finisher himself. The forwarding of the Paris binders is far from perfect—excessively round in the back and very rigid, also carelessly untrue in the squares. It is a common practice to speak of the decadence of the art; very little, however, is advanced to prove it. If the costly display in the goldsmith's art in early times is to be cited, or the origin of the beautiful designs in Grolier, Maioli, and De Thou's time is to be the proof, then it is reasonable; but if ability of workmanship in the art both in forwarding and finishing is to be the gauge, then the art has reason to be proud of the advance it has made in the last half-century and of its present high standard of excellence. The workmanship of Hayday and Bedford in all the principles of good binding is superior to that of Roger Payne, Lewis, or Mackenzie, and the excellent tooling of Capé and Trautz excels in perfection of finish any of the work of their predecessors. And in modern times we are not quite so deficient

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in originality of design as some writers on the subject would have us believe. We may not have surpassed in beauty of conception the old designs, but a few creditable styles have been originated and practiced in my time. Even the designs of Grolier and Maioli were not, strictly speaking, original in conception; you can trace their origin from examples of the goldsmith's art of the tenth and twelfth centuries: the square, the oval, and the circular figures which served for the framework of the jewels and enamels they inlaid. From these I believe the intersected designs were conceived. But in whatever way these fifteenth and sixteenth century designs were originated we must not slight the fact that they are the foundation of the best examples of book decoration and nowhere are they so well and delicately worked as in Paris.

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In regard to the advance made in extra binding within the last forty years America has no need to be ashamed. If a collection of the best specimens of her binders' work could be collected a higher estimate would be formed of their ability. I am very loath to speak of the part I have taken to advance its progress, but as it has been the labor of forty years of my life, I hope I may be pardoned for doing so. I desire to do so for two reasons: first, to make known that all my incitement to do first-class work has been a jealous love for the good name of my adopted country; second, that I may make honorable mention of an able workman, now no more, who for twenty-five years was my chief finisher. I allude to Frederick Gilson.

In 1851 I felt very keenly that in the Exhibition of that year in England there was no exhibit shown of American bookbinding, and in 1852, when it was

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announced that an Exhibition would be held in New York in 1853, I resolved to make as good an exhibit as my abilities and limited means would permit for the credit of American Bookbinding.

In that exhibit were specimens of library binding in calf, morocco, and russia; dictionaries with flexible backs; illuminated printed books in white vellum mosaic; and as a chief attraction of effort this copy of the Alhambra by Jules Goury and Owen Jones, which by the kindness of Theodore Irwin, Esq., its present owner, I am permitted to show you. It is bound in yellowish-brown russia, inlaid with blue and red morocco, constituting the three primitive colors, yellow, blue, and red, the colors so generally used by the Moors in the decoration of that wonderful palace. The design for its decoration is in beautiful keeping with the illustrations in the book, but without being a copy of any one of them. It was designed and worked by Gilson. It took him six months to complete and cost me $500. There was not an engraved ornament used in the decoration—simply curved and straight lines, circles, and dots, the

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effort being to exhibit what the binder alone could do without the aid of engraver, goldsmith, or the like. Though a large folio, measuring 23½×16½ and nearly three inches thick, no thread was used to connect its letterpress and illustrations. They were cemented and bound together with india rubber, enabling the book to lie open with perfect freedom and flatness. Contrary to the usual result of rubber binding, though this heavy volume has been used for thirty-four years, every leaf is as firmly bound as when exhibited in 1853. The designs of the outside and inside border should silence the remark that "no binder has done original work for two centuries," and when we, together with the designs, examine the exactness of the workmanship, we should be proud that such was done in America. This exhibit, in competition with Niedrée of Paris and English and Scotch binders, was awarded the silver medal, the highest award given. Another and later specimen of my binding I exhibit for the excellence of the design and the perfect accuracy of its execution. It is another example of Frederick

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Gilson's work. The volume is a copy of that richly illustrated edition of the New Testament published by Longmans & Co. of London, and presented by them to Wm. H. Appleton, Esq. The finisher gives another example in this design of how he can decorate without the aid of the engraver; there is not an engraved tool in the design, and yet it is very ornate. The frame of the design is inlaid with blue and the scroll-work is freely and gracefully twined through it. The four compartments each contain a symbolic figure more suggestive than obtrusive. The center of this figure is inlaid with crimson, while the four crown-shaped figures surrounding it are inlaid with blue; on the crimson center is delicately traced a cross with glory rays radiating from it. The design affords another proof of how unobtrusively an appropriate symbol can be introduced.

During this nineteenth century bookbinding has made rapid strides, not only as a manufacture, which is evident in a marvelous degree, but in the beautifying of thousands of private libraries with choice specimens of beautiful bindings, giving to their possessors every time they handle them finer feelings

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NEW TESTAMENT. LONGMANS' EDITION.

OUTSIDE DESIGN.

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and sweeter ecstasy of pleasure than many more costly objects of art they possess. I pity those who call themselves cultured and with fine art taste who cannot take from their shelves some few specimens of first-class modern extra binding.

Paris leads in the cultivation of this art, and particularly so, it is said, because of the number of small collectors, each one priding himself on the possession of a Capé, a Niedrée, a Trautz, or of the living artists Lortic and Petit.

In England, also, they are awakening to a sense of the secondary position they hold in the practice of the art and by lectures and publications are endeavoring to encourage their binders to exercise their well-known abilities to a higher standard of excellence. And now what are we Americans doing? Fifty years ago there was not a finely bound book, except what by chance had been procured abroad, to be found in any collection in America. Fine binding was an unknown art. But travel and wealth have quickened a desire for rare books and costly bindings, and given birth to a body of collectors throughout the States that I venture to predict will make

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America possess in another twenty-five years as rare books and fine bindings as can be found in Europe. As to what American binders have done I humbly assert that there are many examples of American workmanship in our collections that would do honor to the best French and English binders of the last half-century. There are better examples of first-class finishing here than Mr. Smalley has any idea of, or he would not write so disparagingly of us. Certainly we need to do as often as possible what we have in a poor way attempted to-night, exemplifying among ourselves the true principles of bookbinding and book decoration. And now, on behalf of my craft, I ask the collectors to have more faith in our ability, to encourage us with fair liberality while we try to reach — yes, even excel — our European brethren.

Trautz did his best work under the patronage of a Rothschild, and Bedford under that of liberal American collectors. I therefore plead with you to bestow your patronage at home instead of abroad, fostering and educating native workmen to an excellence they can never otherwise attain.

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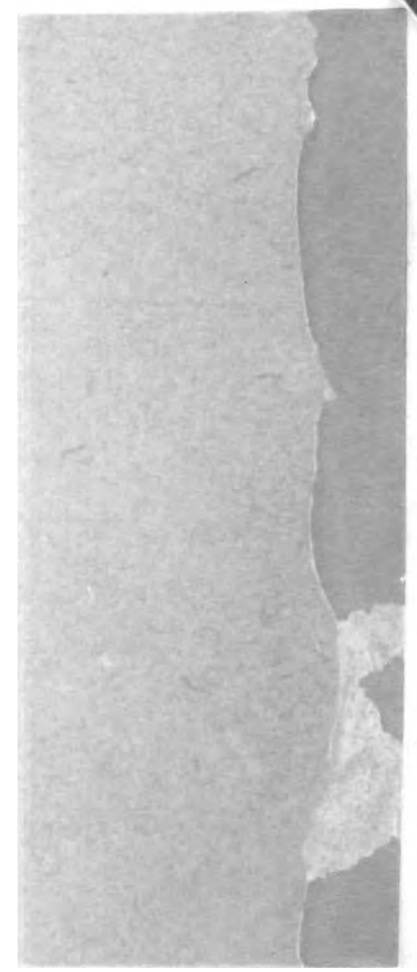

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